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February 8, 2012

Linda Tomlinson, Assistant Superintendent
School Support Services for All Schools
ISBE

Reyna Hernandez, Assistant Superintendent
Language and Early Child Development
ISBE

Dear Ms. Tomlinson and Ms. Hernandez:

This letter addresses the proposed change to age range for the Early Childhood Endorsement to the Illinois Teaching License. The Department of Human Services administers several programs that fall into the realm of “Early Learning and Development,” Child Care, Migrant Head Start, Early Intervention, AOK Early Childhood Networks, and School Health to name a few. Some of these programs focus on very young children (birth to 3 years) and others focus on a wider age range, however, one overarching goal of these programs is for children to be prepared to succeed in school and in life. The Department supports the early childhood age range for the Illinois Professional Educator License remaining birth – Third Grade.

Children from these programs will enter elementary school and deserve to have teachers who are knowledgeable about the continuum of development in the early years – birth to age 8 years. The Department is very concerned that early elementary school teachers (Kindergarten, First, Second and Third grades) receive the education needed to understand where these children have come from and where they are headed – the developmental continuum. This will only be possible if the early childhood age range for a Professional Educator License in Illinois remains Birth through Third Grade.

In addition, DHS administers Gateways to Opportunity, a professional development system that includes credentials for professionals working with children, youth and families. Following the guidance of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the ECE Credential was developed for practitioners who worked with children from birth – age 8 years. It is very important to the Department that Early Childhood Educators in Illinois be prepared to work with this very age range.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Linda Saterfield, Director
Division of Family and Community Services